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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5775
INFO RUMTBK/AMEMBASSY PRIORITY 4812
BT
C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 1766

EXDIS

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: MOPS, VM, LA
SUBJECT: POW/MIA: PAKSE EXCAVATION AND HANDI TECHNICAL MEETING

REF: (A) STATE 371272, (B) VIENTIANE 1747

1. C - ENTIRE TEXT

2. THE MOST RECENT INDICATION I HAVE CONCERNING "JANUARY" AS THE DATE OF PAKSE EXCAVATION WAS REPORTED REF. B. THIS INFORMATION WAS SECOND-HAND. IN CONVERSATIONS WITH CODEL MONTGOMERY, AS I POINTED OUT IN REF. B, LAO OFFICIALS WOULD NOT REPEAT NOT BE PINNED DOWN TO A SPECIFIC TIME FOR THE EXCAVATION.

3. BEARING IN MIND THAT TO DATE WE HAVE NOT REPEAT NOT HAD ANY DETAILED DISCUSSIONS WITH THE LAO CONCERNING THE SPECIFICS OF THE EXCAVATION, BUT HAVE ONLY HEARD THEIR DESIRE FOR A MUCH SMALLER AMERICAN TEAM, I BELIEVE THAT WE STILL HAVE THE POSSIBILITY OF SOME SERIOUS NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE LAO BEFORE WE CAN PROCEED WITH THE EXCAVATION. THIS WOULD BE OBIATED, OF COURSE, IF THE LAO SUDDENLY TELL US THEY ACCEPT ALL ASPECTS OF OUR PROPOSAL, AND GIVE US AN ARRIVAL DATE. DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL THAT LAST YEAR WE WERE GIVEN VERY LITTLE NOTICE TO GET THE JCRC/SIL TEAM INTO LAOS FOR THE INITIAL SITE SURVEY. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT WHEN THE LAO DECIDE TO PROCEED WITH THE PAKSE EXCAVATION WE WOULD SIMILARLY BE GIVEN VERY LITTLE ADVANCE NOTICE.

4. ANOTHER FACTOR AFFECTING THE PAKSE EXCAVATION IS THE LAO STATEMENT DURING THE RECALLS' INCIDENT THAT THEY WOULD "RECONSIDER" SOME ASPECTS OF THEIR POLICY CONCERNING THE US. I HOPE THIS WAS MERELY WORDS, BUT IT MAY MEAN THAT THEY WILL KEEP US DANGLING CONCERNING PAKSE. ALSO, I AM CONCERNED ABOUT POSSIBLE NEGATIVE FALLOUT ON OUR EFFORT HERE FROM THE CURRENT HO CHI MINH CITY "COUP LOT" TRIALS.

5. THIS SAID, HOWEVER, I BELIEVE THAT THERE IS A REASONABLE CHANCE, PERHAPS 50-50, THAT WE WILL GET THE PAKSE EXCAVATION EARLY IN 1985, POSSIBLY IN JANUARY. IN VIEW OF DEPARTMENT'S RATHER FIRMER COMMITMENT FROM THE VIETNAMESE CONCERNING THE TIMING OF THE TECHNICAL

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MEETING, HOWEVER, I RECOMMEND PROCEEDING WITH THE EFFORT TO ARRANGE THE TECHNICAL MEETING. I WOULD RECOMMEND TRYING TO SCHEDULE IT AS EARLY IN THE MONTH AS POSSIBLE TO ALLOW FOR A POSSIBLE LATE-MONTH PAKSE EXCAVATION, POSSIBLY FOLLOWING A PROBABLE INDOCHINESE FOREIGN MINISTERS' CONFERENCE.

6. I REGRET THAT I CANNOT BE MORE SPECIFIC. I BELIEVE THE LAO WILL TELL US ONLY WHEN THEY ARE GOOD AND READY WHAT TIMING SUITS THEM, AND DO NOT REPEAT NOT THINK IT AEVISABLE FOR ME TO PRESS THEM AT THIS POINT.

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END OF MESSAGE

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